



# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

## UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

## HIGHLIGHTS

May 5, 2014

### Surface Visibility – Transportation Operations – Suncoast District

Report Number NO-AR-14-004

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The U.S. Postal Service uses the Surface Visibility (SV) system to collect data to help plan, manage, and optimize the surface transportation network. Employees scan barcodes on trailers and containers to track mail volume throughout the surface transportation network. This gives managers information to manage resources, track mail volume, and identify and correct transportation problems.

Our objective was to assess SV system use in transportation operations in the Suncoast District in Southern Florida.

#### **WHAT THE OIG FOUND:**

The Suncoast District could more effectively execute SV system scanning. We observed employees estimating trailer bed loads and manually entering the information into the SV system 73 percent of the time. Consequently, they were only scanning containers 27 percent of the time. Because of this improvised workaround, the official scan container compliance score reported in the SV system was much higher at 55 percent (a 28 percent variance from the actual scans).

These conditions occurred because containers did not always have properly barcoded placards and employees were inadequately trained and supervised. Also, some employees stated that it was more convenient to use the workaround than to actually perform the scans. These actions might have artificially

inflated SV scan compliance performance scores for some area and district employees. This information was provided to the OIG's Office of Investigations for action as appropriate.

Because the SV system data were unreliable and not useful for optimizing transportation, management missed an opportunity to eliminate or modify 103 highway contract route trips and eliminate 2,928 postal vehicle service driver workhours. These changes would have saved an average of about \$2,124,000 annually in transportation-related costs.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

We recommended the vice president, Southern Area Operations, ensure containers have the proper barcodes for scanning and implement controls and employee training to ensure proper scanning procedures are followed. In addition, we recommended management verify 103 trips from highway contract routes are eliminated or modified, and review and eliminate 2,928 workhours from postal vehicle service schedules or document the reasons for retaining those workhours.